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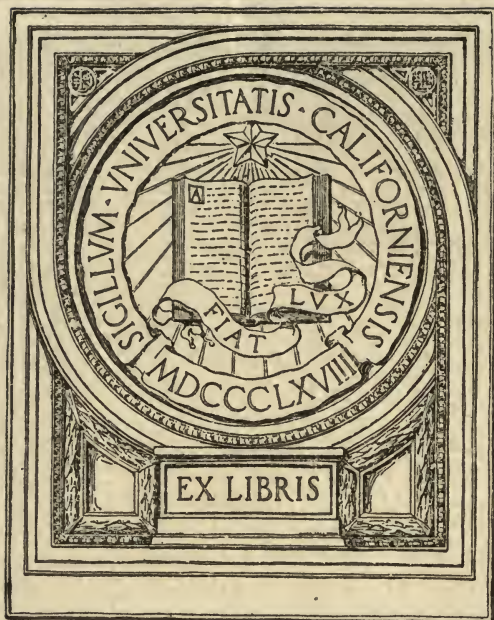


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EGYPT

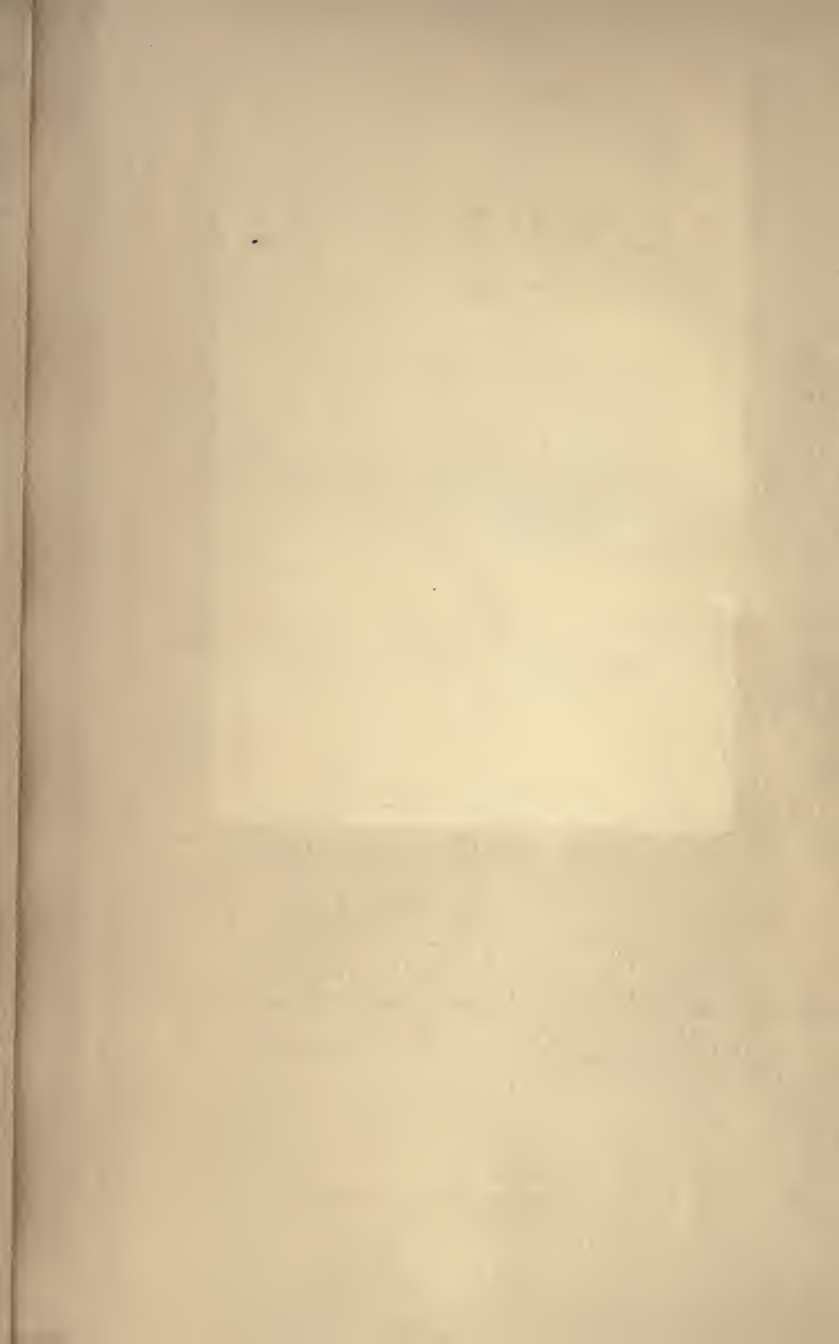
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FRANCIS COUTTS



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EGYPT

AND OTHER POEMS

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EGYPT

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

FRANCIS COUTTS



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EGYPT

1898-1899

THE

THE

THE

WILLIAM BRENDON AND SON, LTD., PRINTERS, PLYMOUTH

NOTE

SEVERAL of the lyrics included in this volume appeared in the Press; but I have no complete record of the journals that gave them a corner. I must therefore crave the indulgence of the editors for not being able, as my wont is, to ask their leave to republish them.

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EGYPT

AND OTHER POEMS

EGYPT



EGYPT

AGAINST the broad red sunset o'er the Nile,
Across the desert, like a burnt-out pyre,
The great Stone Pyramid looms, and o'er the pile
Bright Venus orbs her star of silvery fire.

Touched with soft purple lies this ancient land,
Where mighty Pharaohs reigned ; but now no
more
Their bannered armies march across the sand,
Nor bartering navies sail from shore to shore.

Egypt, once mistress of the world's desire,

And earthly spouse of the One God confessed

In many forms,—the sunny-wingéd Sire

In stately fane and statue oft expressed,—

Why dost thou hide thyself, O Queen, and cower

Beneath the desert rock, in tomb or cave ?

Is there reserved for thee no regal hour

For evermore ? Still must thou be a slave ?

See where unwearied Nile leads down his flood

From the primeval lakes, to soak the plain

With tawny deluge, that like generous blood

Quickens the lifeless waste to grass and grain.

The god-like river his accustomed task

Eternally fulfils ; and that great Sun,

The symbol of the Father, does not mask

His power and pomp, because thy course is run :

Old Nile remains, but thou remainest not,

For thou art past and perished, buried, lost ;

And, like thy mummies, all thy doings rot,

And all thy thoughts to all the winds are tost.

We know no more than thou didst know ; the form

Of knowledge changes, but the essence still

Is an enigma ; we perceive the Storm

That shakes the world, but not the guiding Will ;

Or if, perchance, the wisdom of the East

Was not a fabulous tale, and secret things

Have fled our learning, though not yet has ceased

The far, faint beat of their receding wings,

What was thy day of forty centuries worth,

What thy magnificence and conquests, all

The marvel of thy glory, to the Earth,

If night returning followed on thy fall ?

To us proud dwellers o'er the northern tide

Why was no better gift by thee bequeathed,—

By thee, whose kings ere death were deified,

Than festal goblets and a sword unsheathed ?

At Memphis and at Thebes the full delight

Of all the senses, and that deeper draught,

The vintage of the falchion in the fight,

The wine of red dominion, oft were quaffed :

These were our heritage ; the lust of trade,

The lust to conquer, and the lust to know ;

And all our fame and all our follies fade,

As thine have faded, like a wreath of snow.

But now the crimson wings of sunset droop,

The star of Venus treble brilliance shows,

Beneath the crescent moon dark shadows troop,

Save where the Nile with pallid current flows.

How still it is, how silent ! Nothing stirs ;

 This is a place of spectres and of death,
As if it had been laid beneath God's curse,
 Because it loved not his creative breath.

The waste is full of terror ; I seem near
 Some dreadful magic or dark mystery, hid
From the foundation of the world : I hear
 Dead voices calling from the Pyramid.

Again I look on that bright star ; the sound
 Ceases, but leaves this message sad and strange,
That human destiny whirls round and round
 As in an orbit, changing without change ;

All things that seem to finish will again

In some new fashion plod the same sad road,

For every beast that sinks beneath his pain

Another lifts the inevitable load :

To view the caravan of countless years

That from horizon to horizon trails

Moves us no more to wonder, but to tears :

Various the merchants are, but not their bales.

EGYPT IN SPRING

HERE are the sterile hills and stony sand,
Here flows the river by whose flooding wave
The waste is fringed with tillage ; but no land
Of field and wood and meadow, no conclave
Of warblers, clamorous in an osier-bed,
Declaring to the world how sweet it is to wed.

Far hence the trembling flowers peep forth and pry
To see if winter with his scowl has gone,
Or spread their leafy wings, as if to fly,
For joy because the sun has newly shone ;

Far hence they wake from solitary sleep,
Befriended by the birds and foals and frisking sheep.

Methought I saw a mist of bladed green

Exhaled by the sown wheat, before the snow's

Last bordering wreath had melted from between

The furrows near the hedges ; whence uprose

The little bird whose soul is yet so strong

That straight to heaven ascends his sacrifice of
song.

It was a mirage ; for in England lies

That field, and thence a boy's fresh soul was
borne

Up with the lark's into the deep blue skies ;

No more to know so marvellous a morn ;

For as no desert bird doth heavenward sing,

So can no desert heart to heaven uplift his wing.

THE CHRISTIAN TO THE ARAB

WHY call us infidel ? We think

There is one God, our King, our Friend,

Our only hope from brink to brink

Of birth and death ; our source and end.

What though on desert sands you bare

Your feet and low adoring fall,

While we in chambers kneel for prayer,

Bare-headed ? He is Lord of all.

“OH, TO BE IN ENGLAND—”

CELANDINE, I pray you tell
Of your western-sloping dell,
Where the Rother softly sounds
By the Stodham garden-grounds,
Bubbling down the Adhurst dale
To the grassy Cowdray vale.

Round about your mossy room,
Only now the willows bloom,
And the hazels, like born vassals
Bending, shake their golden tassels,

At the feet of oak and elm,

Monarchs of the woodland realm.

Summer is astir ; bright star,

You her trusted herald are !

Yet too soon, where Rother rills

To the beech-enclustered hills,

Autumn on the path will shower

The arching rhododendron flower,

Like a haze of mallow hue

Down the leafy avenue.

MEMORIES

I SEE a little house of God

That stands in holy ground,

Where o'er the dead is heaped the sod

Of many a grassy mound,

And there a lady and her child

The heavenly grace implore—

Ah, the faces and the places that I shall see no more

I see a hollied Christmas hall

With glad hearts round the board,

To keep the holy festival

Of God and man's accord ;

No withered years behind them drift,

Their time is yet in store—

Ah, the faces and the places that I shall see no more !

I see a river, pool to pool,

Wind on, by elms and towers,

Where merry boys just free from school

Are rivals in young powers ;

O'er fields they run, in deeps they dive,

On floods they ply the oar—

Ah, the faces and the places that I shall see no more !

I see the brimming river glide

Beside a tall church spire,

And a maiden wandering by my side

In holiday attire ;

We watch the pallid current flow

Beside the reedy shore—

Ah, the faces and the places that I shall see no more

And yet another church I see,

A Hampshire hill it crowns,

And underneath an old yew-tree,

Beside the Stonor downs,

My lady mother lies at rest

And, oh, my heart is sore

For the faces and the places that I shall see no more

A DEMAIN

IN the days remembered not,
Oft you stood beside my cot,
Sometimes touched by terrors wild
For the welfare of your child ;
Yet above my slumbering head
Happy mother's tears you shed,
And to God entrusting me
Whispered, " A demain, chéri."

When my feet had just begun
To be confident to run,

And my waking senses found
Grass was green and balls were round,
Always when I bade good night,
At the fading of the light,
You would take me on your knee,
Murmuring, "A demain, chéri."

When I found those springs of joy
That delight the growing boy,
All the day to roam the field
Rod and bat and oar to wield,
Take my place beside the board,
Prizes win and treasures hoard,
Sealed to sleep I still could be
With your "A demain, chéri."

When to school I must be sent,
For reward and punishment,
Often from your cell of grief
Love permitted you relief ;
Borne upon his wings, you wept
Oft beside me, as I slept,
Almost like a piteous plea
Breathing " A demain, chéri."

To the Thames, that silvery falls,
Weir to weir, by Windsor's walls,
Or the Cam, whose stiller state
Leaves in autumn tessellate,
When the dusk had starred the sky
Oft your anxious thought would fly

Over hill and vale and lea,
Crying "A demain, chéri."

When the world, a larger school
With scant pity for the fool,
Made all other lessons vain
With its discipline of pain,
Oft I came to seek your face,
Quiet in your quiet place,
And with mingled grief and glee
Heard your "A demain, chéri."

Still, unless by fancy vain
Mocked, or memory's echoing strain,

Still, though vanished from my sight,

Always at the fall of night,

Like a message from the hills,

Carried by repeating rills,

I can hear you call to me,

Bidding "A demain, chéri."

THE MAN CHILD

MOTHER, my mother, thou who once didst tend me

Nurse me, lull me, on thy patient breast,

Oh, might it be that now thou couldst befriend me

And give me rest !

Oh, might it be that I could kneel before thee,

Knowing thee now, as ever, sure to bless,

The passion of thy pity would restore me

To happiness.

The tracks are mingled and the clues are tangled,

My wandering feet in mire and clay are fast,

The chime of life is fiercely jarred and jangled

By demon blast.

Mother, my mother, could I hide my weeping

Upon thy bosom, thou wouldst calm this wild

Tempestuous terror! I should soon be sleeping,

And wake, a child.

VANISHINGS

My home beneath the wooded hill,

Where all day coos the dove,

When every vernal voice is still

That erewhile sang of love,

I roam about thee like a ghost,

A homeless ghost I roam,

For there to me old love is lost

And there is lost my home.

Beneath the arching trees I walk,

I tread the mossy way

Where oft I heard the magpies talk

And many a woodland fay.

I lean upon the rustic gate

That bounds the haunted glade,

Where ofttimes I was wont to wait

And greet the trysting maid.

No damsel of a mortal mien,

No earthly love was she,

O'er realms of Faery she was queen

And ruled a magic sea :

Fled are her swift, white feet ! I turn,

And where the waters rill

Between the alders and the fern

Beneath the forest hill,

I wander in a musing mood

Along the pathway green,

Where dappling through the mazy wood

Descends the sunny sheen.

Would I had caught her to myself,

And kept her by my side,

And made that goddess, or that elf,

My one and only bride !

Then hand in hand across the land

We two had strayed along,

And ever at her sweet command

Had bubbled up my song,

As purely as a spring that wells

Beneath a sacred mount,

Where palmers pause to fill their shells

And quaff the foaming fount.

TO WALTER HERRIES POLLOCK

“ EHEU FUGACES——”

AH me, the years, they glide away so fast
That ere the night begins, the day is past,
And though we fear not that Osiris waits
To try by Truth the balance of our fates,
Nor shudder at Proserpina's brown gloom
And thronéd Aeacus' judicial doom,
We dread, my friend, much more, in the inner
Of our own spirit to be held in thrall :
Our memory's haunted chamber, where the gh
Of all our murdered moments range their hosts

And scarce, alas, our fancy is so fond
That we can catch faint melodies, beyond
The noisy world, of Greek or Roman lyre,
Or Hebrew harps of more divine desire,
Or "the undisturbed song of pure concent,"
By clarion calls to onset never rent.

But think you 'tis an enviable plight
Neither to dread the depth or hope the height,
And yet have no assurance, when we end,
That we shall lose our Self, and keep our Friend ?
No, not the lessening years, that quickly lapse,
Affright us, but their whispered word, " Perhaps,
When we conduct you whither all must go,
The old Friend will not greet you, but that Foe."

TO OSCAR BROWNING

AN IMPROMPTU

I SEE you always through a mist of tears,
Because my feet have wandered far away
From that straight path whence your feet nev
stray,
But on and on, contemptuous of the fears
And folly of the world—folly that wears
Our heart to pieces, and the fears that fray—
You journey ever to the perfect day
That waits your soul in other, happier spheres.
And oh ! how many, with more voice than I
Can boast of eloquence, could tell the tale

Of all they owe to you, of aim set high,

Good purpose strengthened, thoughts that never
fail

To animate the spirit, till it fly

Far over sea and land to find the Grail.

TO ERNEST HARTLEY COLERIDGE

FROM EGYPT

COLERIDGE, descended from a King of Song,
Who, writing for the few, yet won the throng,
The magic master of those borderlands
That reason owns, but fancy understands,
Backwards and forwards you and I can look
But only *know* the past's peruséd book ;
We cannot turn the future's tiniest page
Nor learn one second easier than an age ;
Yet, if we dare to prophesy at all
Of any happy thing that may befall,

To this one oracle let us attune

Our voices—that we meet in England soon.

The celandine, the dearest flower that blows,

The gladdest gold of all that Nature grows,

The anemone, babe-darling of the breeze,

Whom the fond sire delights to toss and tease,

The velvet hazel-blooms, that children strew

In village churches, when with wonder new

They hear the story of Palm Sunday told,

Sing their meek Lord, and little fingers fold—

These will be gone ; and so, beside the rills,

The swaying surges of the daffodils,

And even the blue that ripples round the plinths

Of forest trees, the sea of hyacinths,

Will all have ebbed away, when I come home
From Memphian ruins, once the Pharaohs' Rome :
But still the crofts and orchards will be gay,
Laced with bright blossoms, fringing every spray,
The lilac of the cuckoo-pint will mellow
The buttercups' and kingcups' gaudy yellow,
The woods with freshest foliage will be dight,
As if within them burnt some fairy light,
New grass will crown the happy fields, new grace
Will pass like blushes over Nature's face,
And all the birds that come across the sea
Will sing their blithest songs for you and me.

But ah, dear friend, if you and I may tread,
While vernal clouds yet veil Helvellyn's head,

Some upland meadow or some heathery fell,
Hung o'er the Lake your grandsire loved so well,
Where oft with Wordsworth he was wont to trace
The Sybil Nature to her secret place,
Then will my exile here be not in vain,
Where banished to the bare Egyptian plain
By cold Arcturus, breathing snow and sleet,
I found the sun, but missed the needful heat
Of genial rays that spread from mind to mind,
And, like the Nile, leave fertile fields behind :
This is the joy that I again shall prove,
When the slant Poles a little farther move,
Letting the sun with fuller aspect smile
On the cold corners of our northern isle.

ANGELA BURDETT-COUTTS

(Died January 2nd, 1907)

THE Baroness is dead ; the nation needs
No other name for her ; there was but one
Who bore a crownlet that so brightly shone
Because it was the symbol of good deeds.

The Baroness is dead ; so sadly surge
The billows of reiterated dole
Upon a People's lips ; but in their soul
Throbs the great ocean of a deeper dirge.

The Baroness is dead ; from shore to shore

And over every sea the message goes ;

Passed is the searcher of neglected woes ;

The healer of the wounded is no more.

TO I. ALBENIZ

THERE is no need to build a bridge of verse,
To span our separation ; no dark curse
Of sundering waters that between us flow
Can fright our souls from passing to and fro.

You sit and talk to me, with falling night,
You come and welcome me, with lifting light ;
All through the day, let good or ill betide,
You move to me or feel me by your side.

We have so many places where we meet ;
Sometimes a garden, with an arboured seat,

Where sing the birds, in shelter from the sun,
And silver floods of Thames or Arno run :

Or by that rhododendron-shaded rill
Where the dear spirit of my mother still
Wanders to welcome me, but vainly waits ;
Against me now are locked the lichened gates.

Or else we linger by the Lake that steep
The shadow of grey Chillon in her deeps,
Where white, remote, the Dents du Midi rise,
To draw from weary Earth our weary eyes.

.

So far I wrote ; then Death, who snatched my pen

Cried, " Write his epitaph ; beyond Earth's realm

He voyages." I said, " He goes where men

Have gone before ; and I shall go to him."

KING EDWARD VII's MEMORIAL

THE King has passed, and passed his funeral meed
Of pageantry : the solemn, sullen bell,
Hushing the city with its muffled knell ;
The Master's music, and the weird hill-screed
Of Scotland : now his People have decreed,
For sorrow of perpetual farewell,
Marmoreal remembrances, to tell
His long devotion to the nation's need.

Only one monument can fitly shrine
His brave endeavour ; and to us belong
The firm foundations of its great design,
The work for which he died : we do him wrong
Unless our hearts we steadfastly incline
To build on them an Empire wise and strong.

EDWARD THE GIVER

BORNE to his rest

In his castle by the river

Let his memory be blest

And his name be The Giver.

How his life, an oblation,

On the altar was laid

Of the need of the nation

Let mention be made :

But Duty, so casting

Down Self, shall be known

By record more lasting

Than marble or stone ;

Lying at rest

In his castle by the river

Let his memory be blest

And his name be The Giver.

“ CÆSAR ”

Poor little pathetic face !

Mourning and mourning your master,
I seem in your sorrow to trace
Something vaster :

The woe of a world, in tears
For a cause that it knows not,
Reaping the evil of years
That it sows not.

IN MEMORY OF I. ALBENIZ.

DEAR FRIEND, in death's distance you yet seem so
nigh

That you laugh with my laughter and sigh with my
sigh ;

If I see a fair picture or hear a sweet tune,

I feel you are with me, companion so boon !

So boon in the best sense ; such conversance lies

In the sound of the voice and the glance of the eyes ;

So boon in the better conceit of the word,

When the good is still seen and the good is still heard :

56 IN MEMORY OF I. ALBENIZ

For good you would find in the commonest weed
That grows by the wayside and has the most need
To be recognised, loved ; by compassion and grace
You saw the good look in the worst featured face.

Yet an artist at heart and an artist in deed,
You condemned without sparing who sowed the
wrong seed ;

Yourself never sowed but was healthy and strong
And kept within bounds, the perfection of song.

It was mine to afford you, a privilege great,
Some stories of fortune and favour and fate,
And these with your music you led up so high,
That, no longer of earth, they became of the sky.

Alas ! what poor tribute to beauty and force,
Can I on your record of labour endorse,
How poorly emblazon the scroll of your years
Which were free from all stain, till I blurred them
with tears !

I am wearier grown since you passed from my sight
Through the mist of ascent to the mountains of light,
For though well-beloved by the friends that remain,
I need the friend most who comes never again.

You were gentle and true, and no woman could be
A guide of such patience as you were to me,
For still on the mountains the steep track you traced
And were never content save we evenly paced.

58 IN MEMORY OF I. ALBENIZ

So we evenly paced ; if I loitered behind,
You rallied my heart with your courage of mind,
And still pointed up where the great ones have trod
If not to the feet, to the footsteps of God.

Farewell, and farewell ; and when I too can burst
From this chrysalis world to another less curs'd,
May you, as of old, with my coming elate,
By the side of my mother my footsteps await.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Is it true that he has gone
To bathe in streams of Helicon,
Where the Muses surely found him
When to serve them first they bound him ?

Yet he leaves to us in fee
Marvellous lands of majesty ;
Lyonesse and Calydon,
Mountains of the Rising Sun,
Meadows where the Maries run,
Mazes by the Dryads spun,

Magic shores where billows surge ;

There we still may wander on,

Pipes of Pan to hear, and see

Passionate sights. Then come with me

And hear the sea-nymphs sing his dirge :

“Ave, vale,” ours shall be.

WINDERMERE

How many a summer since I set my eyes

On this the fairest scene in all the land :

The white mysterious water, softly spanned

With thin grey clouds drifting o'er evening skies ;

The wooded meadows' green embroideries

Along the curving shore ; the hills that stand

Watching ; the distant ranges, where, unscanned

Except by heaven, the Pikes of Langdale rise.

Let me no more this influence forsake :

Whatever landscape, oft remembered, fills

Dry places of my heart with trickling rills,
This almost youth's lost magic can remake,
To lave me in the coolness of the lake,
To lift me to the comfort of the hills.

CAVERSFIELD PRIMES

(A personal experience related to me by Lord North)

ST. LAWRENCE'S DAY and the dawn of day,
And my Lord and his hounds are up and away,
Though not yet has the plough-share proclaimed it
the time

When hounds in cry make a cheerful chime.

But my Lord enjoyed, at the rising sun,
To take his hounds for a pleasant run,
To keep them healthy in wind and limb,
The furrows to cross and the streams to swim.

64 CAVERSFIELD PRIMES

By meadow and wood they were jogging along,

When music they heard and a choral song,

In the Church of St. Lawrence, by Caversfield village

Where Buckingham yeomen tend cattle and tillage

“Stay, stay!” cried my Lord, as once did Canute

When the Ely monks sang and the oarsmen were

mute ;

“For neither in London nor Oxford,” said he,

“Can they chant so divinely, with such solemn glee.

So they listened and listened, and even the hounds

Seemed attentive to hear those angelical sounds,

And still the sweet anthem came not to a close,

But its harmonies spread like the leaves of a rose.

Till my Lord turned for home, since no more might
he hear

Lest his Lady be filled with foreboding and fear,
And he cried, "It is strange that I never heard say
How Caversfield sings on St. Lawrence's Day."

But from that day to this might it never be known
Who those singers could be who were chanting alone,
For the parson declared, in a tone of some scorn,
That no service was held on St. Lawrence's morn.

Yet I venture to think that if sounds can pierce
through

From the world of lost spirits, as some say they do,
It is right and in reason, it must be confessed,
That some should glide in from the world of the blest.

PEACE

AN angel hovers on evasive wings
Ever above the head of him who sings,
Of him who sorrows, him who labours, dreams,
Or follows pleasure ; still the purple gleams
Of those bright pinions circle round his head :
Perchance they circle even round the dead.

Evasive are her wings ; they never fly
Quite from the precincts of their native sky ;
Whether on laughing harvest-fields we look
Or trace the turnings of a cressy brook,

Whatever way we woo her to our heart,
The Seraph, moving with us, moves apart.

Oh, when shall we entice her wings to stoop ?
When will the evening of her presence droop
On our unquiet day ? We haste and haste
Aimless, and ever round our feet the waste
Widens, unwatered save by bitter tears,
Unpeopled save by shades of formless fears.

O gentle influence, descend, descend,
And let our greatest evil have an end ;
Although less often should we call unkind
Our fortune than the folly of our mind,

Pity our state and like a fragrance sink
Into our souls, to temper all we think.

Fold, fold thy wings, thou earth-avoiding dove,
Obey our luring, like a hawk of love,
And when, at last alighting, thou hast brought
The close of seeking that so long we sought,
Long as thy sojourn may thy solace be,
Not for Time only, but Eternity.

TEARS

THERE is a river, ordained to roam

Where never the slow kine feed,

Where never the warbler builds her home,

By vale or forest or mead.

Barren and sullen and black it creeps,

Bearing not boat nor barge ;

Nothing is fashioned within its deeps,

Nothing along its marge.

Never the city it leaps to lave,

Never o'erbrims its side

To moisten the meadow ; across its wave

Never the swallows glide.

Flowerless glimmers its pallid edge,

Treeless shimmers its sheen ;

Never its shallows are set with sedge,

Never with rushes green.

Salt from its birth in the marsh of wrong,

Bitter with tribute rills,

Its home is not in the sea, its song

Is not of the pure, blue hills.

Shrouded in mist, it makes its moan

Of the burden of mortal years,

Like the cry of a child, in the night, alone ;

And men have called it "Tears."

SUICIDE

WHEN you hurried o'er the border,

I wonder what you found ;

Less tumult and disorder,

Or more, beyond the bound ?

Are there flowers ? And do they wither

Less fast in that brown air ?

Or do you look back hither,

Remembering flowers more fair ?

Or is the light no dimmer

Than here from noon to noon,

With sunshine and star-glimmer

And glories of the moon ?

And are there heights and spaces,

Far distance marked by hills,

Wide vales, and mountain places,

Whence rivers look like rills ?

Or do you suffer terror

That voidness is your doom,

A land too vague for error,

A world too vast for room.

Too limitless for vision

And too immense for sound ?

When you broke your earthly prison,

I wonder what you found.

MUSIC

THE goat-god Pan has only caught
Chance echoes from Apollo's lute ;
Since when, the creature is distraught,
Puzzled and pained, and no more brute.

Pan is nor brute nor god ; the dews
Of music, falling from the spheres,
O'erbrim his heart, that cannot choose
But change them into human tears.

COUNSEL TO A LAD

WHATEVER you seek you shall find ;
If you seek for the wind, then the wind
Will blow all your dreams away
And leave you breathless and grey ;

If you ask for the night, then the night
Will swathe and swaddle your sight ;
Whatever in heaven or earth
You wish, you can bring to birth.

Then whatever you wish for, beware !

For every wish is a prayer,

And every granted desire

Burns into the soul, like fire.

THE DEATH-SONG OF GUENEVERE

QUEEN GUENEVERE sat in her bower

When Death came entering in ;

“ Fair Queen,” said he, “ ’tis your latest hour,

And you must confess your sin.”

“ I cannot confess my sin,” said she,

“ Come, list to my song instead,

And if you are truly a lover of me,

You may sing it when I am dead.

“ What ought a Queen to sing,

To sing with her latest breath ?

What but a song of her King

And a sorrow more sad than death ?

“ My King he loveth the land

Of the people he maketh free,

That marches down to the sand

And silt of the circling sea :

My King he loveth his land,

But alas ! he loveth not me ! ”

ETTARD'S TROTH

SIR PELLEAS was a knight full bold,

And the lady Ettard was fair ;

And he won at the tourney a sleeve of gold,

Which he prayed Sir Gawain to bear

To the lady Ettard, as he homeward rode ;

Then Sir Gawain by oath was bound,

And he journeyed to where the damsel abode,

And the damsel herself he found.

But when he saw her so brave and bright,

His lust by the fiend was led ;

So " Alas ! " he cried, " for your own true knight

I left at the tourney, dead ! "

Then she made great dole ; but a lady fair

May never a long time grieve,

So she gave him her love and she bade him wear

Sir Pelleas' golden sleeve.

Sir Pelleas rides apace, apace,

Fain to behold his fere,

And ever he follows her flying face

By forest and mead and mere ;

Till he comes at last to her castle gate,

And the warder has thrown it wide,

And he enters the walls with heart elate

For the love of his beauteous bride.

Then her name he cries ; but none replies ;

And her damsels are whispering low

By an open window ; and soon he spies

A pavilion as white as snow.

He hastens out to the fair green lawn,

And the curtain he pulls aside ;

Ah ! better for love had he left it drawn ;

For there is Ettard, his bride,

In the arms of his friend, asleep ! He reels :

Then takes his sword, to slay ;

Then pauses. A poor revenge, he feels,

And death too easy a way.

So he leaves the weapon across them both,

Keen shame, that shall never depart ;

The symbol and sign of a severed troth,

And the pledge of a broken heart.

THE WAY OF LOVE

IN that incomparable day,
The time of strong impetuous youth,
Love led me down the broader way ;
But yet it was the track of truth.

I saw the sorrow on his face
Whenever I would turn aside ;
I found to journey pace by pace
Was hard ; and yet the way was wide.

Companionless the pilgrims plod

The smooth, but narrow, road ; to each

Faith whispers little tales of God ;

But Love knows more than Faith can teach

LOS

THERE is a Devil, but only one
Cast from our grossness by the Sun ;
He is the shadow of desire
Revealed by intellectual fire.

Could we but let the light pour through,
As rays of morning pierce the dew,
No longer should we throw a shade
And so no longer be afraid :

Until at last desire became
Merged in the everlasting flame,
Drawn up like dewdrops and dispersed
By the same force that made them first.

TO A HOUND BAYING THE MOON

WHAT makes thee bay the moon ?

Art thou bewitched, poor loon,

Enamoured of that disregardful face ?

Is there a moth that stings

E'en dogs to dream of wings,

To bear them up, some heavenly hag to chase ?

Thou maddenest with amaze

At that malignant gaze,

Chilling and curdling as Medusa's head ;

Thou of the raving voice,

Wouldst thou be Dian's choice ?

The glittering goddess beams on thee—but dead.

Thou, to thy kennel tied,
Wishing the heavenly bride,
Art futile worshipper of false desire ;
So oft, alas ! do men,
Straining from Earth's dark den,
Take for authentic light reflected fire.

EPIGRAMS

I

Genesis III. 22

I CAN'T believe

That God was not too clever

To fancy Adam might have lived for ever ;

For God already had created Eve.

II

The question of life's origin to beg,

Science derives all creatures from an egg,

Turning the ancient problem of who made it

Into the modern riddle of who laid it.

III

Though you were married in a Church, don't blame
The altar, if it did not light a flame ;
Though Heaven's insurance cover Cupid's arson,
If there's no fire at all, don't damn the parson.

IV

That minor ages minor poets breed
Is certain, without reasons analytic,
'Tis more surprising that they don't succeed
In ever bringing forth a minor critic.

PUNCH AND JUDY

A DOGGEREL

“ ROOTI-TOOTI-TOOTI-TOO ! ” ’Tis the Punch and
Judy Show ;

I remember it long ago

In my dear old puppet days,

And I love the hunchback Jester and all his wicked
ways.

“ Rooti-tooti-tooti-too ! ” ’Tis a very jolly sound,

And the Pan-pipes tootle too, and a crowd is gaping
round ;

I join the throng, arrested by the old familiar cry,

And the children’s happy faces make me smile—
ah me ! and sigh.

Now the play begins : there's Judy ! and the quarrels soon commence :

She is very shrill, is Judy, and has very little sense,
So the red-nosed rascal batters her and beats her
from her senses,

He is such a downright villain, with no underhand
pretences.

But he batters her and beats her, just a little bit
beyond

What husbands are allowed to do, however fierce or
fond,

And soon a man in blue appears, a truly dreadful
sight,

That makes the dear old scoundrel quake and quiver
in a fright,

Until he takes him unawares and cracks him on the
crown

And he who had laid down the law must now him-
self lie down.

And after that come many men : I know them not
by name ;

It does not matter who they are, their end is all the
same ;

He thwacks them all upon the head and lays them
out in rows,

Then horribly he chuckles, with his finger to his nose.

Now comes the part I love the best ; a merry clown
appears,

A little thing of laughter, and perchance sometimes
of tears,

But now his only object is to worry poor old Punch,
Who has done a dozen murders and has done them
in a bunch.

He mixes up those corpses in a most ingenious way,
And how many bodies lie there, 'tis impossible to say ;
For whenever Punch would count them, as a sports-
man counts his rabbits

(And it is not many murderers that have such careful
habits),

That most delightful Andrew proceeds at once to
show

How a dozen planted corpses can multiply and grow.

'Tis a wondrous thing to watch him, how old Pontius
he can cozen,

For he always manages to make the twelve a baker's
dozen,

Until the ancient sinner, with a lot of nasal grum-
bling,

Detects the gay impostor in a little bit of fumbling.

Then up goes that great club of his; he aims a
deadly blow,

Which, had it taken full effect, had broken up the
show,

But the Antic still is equal to all possible occasions,
And with a much abraded corpse he wards off all
abrasions.

So up and down Punch beats the clown, or, rather
tries to beat him,

But never with his cleverest dodge is able to defeat
him ;

Until the children laugh and scream, to see him in
high dudgeon,

For now the clown, by sleight supreme, has robbed
him of his bludgeon !

Lord ! how he thumps the poor old wretch : enough,
one thinks, to blind him ;

Then suddenly he rushes out, and leaves the club
behind him.

But Punch, who little cares for blows not given
below the buckle,

Just rubs his head and pats his nose and soon begins
to chuckle.

And now appears a scarlet Judge, who brings a
gorgeous Beadle,

A pair of more pomposity than Punch can whack or
wheedle ;

A parson makes a windy speech, a lawyer one
absurder,

And then our poor old friend's condemned to Tyburn
Tree for murder.

He calls his dog to comfort him, and Toby comes
up smiling

(For dogs can smile as well as men and are often
more beguiling),

With his Toby collar round his neck, a dirty mongrel
darling,

Who cannot at his master's club prevent himself
from snarling.

But little comfort Punch can get, for now an appa-
rition,

A bogey from the nether pit invites him to per-
dition ;

His hair is like a door-mat green, his eyes like fire-
works whirring,

He's black as coal—and, gracious me ! those corpses
all are stirring.

—
Toby gives one short howl, without apology de-
camping,

His master in a corner cowers, no more inclined for
ramping,

As Bogey, in an awful voice, says *this* time, without
joking,

There really is a grid prepared, and pops off to his
stoking.

And see ! the red-haired hangman comes, a horrid
human weasel,

Who brings his gallows with him, as a painter brings
his easel ;

And now all eyes are riveted and still is every
tongue—

Oh, can His Red - faced Nosiness be going to be
hung ?

He is looking rather limp and lax, as if he now
thought sinning,

Which is so haltered in the end, best curbed in the
beginning,

And when Jack Ketch the necktie shows, as if he
were a draper,

A child might almost knock him down with a spilli-
ken of paper.

He is always weak without his club (he had let it
lie beside him),

As Samson was without his hair, and anyone can
ride him ;

When he cuddles up his cudgel, all his naughtiness
comes back,

He's a match for Jack the Hangman, or for any
other Jack.

So when he has embraced again his only friend, his
staff,

He recovers, with that chuckle, which is his peculiar
laugh,

And delicately stepping, like poor Agag, on his toes
(Although one cannot see them), to the last of all
his foes,

He humbly cries, "O Master Ketch, pray do me this
last grace,

To show me how to noose your neck, if I were in
your place."

So that very stupid person (tho' there's many a
man that chooses

To poke his silly neck into unnecessary nooses)

Puts his own head through the collar, like a yokel
at a fair,

And of course Punch hoists him skyward, where he
dangles in the air.

And that's the end, or ought to be, although I'm
not quite certain

That we do not get another glimpse of Bogey, were
the curtain ;

But anyhow the moral is (though some may think
it frightful)

That Punch, because of all his crimes, is immortal
and delightful,

And when the showman's wife comes round, a woman
thin and pallid,

I put a shilling in her cup, to prove approval
valid.

“Rooti-tooti-tooti-too !” Punch grows more and
more conceited,

Law and order are defeated,

And the Pan-pipes tootle too,

And the drum and Toby make a valedictory ado.

“Rooti-tooti-too !” Dear old Punch, I love him so !

I can hear him long ago,

Down the distance of the days ;

May he never be converted from his charming
wicked ways !

DOLLY

A little girl has been put to bed by her nurse, who leaves her alone. Near her lies her doll in a cradle. It is summer time, the window is open, and a nightingale is singing in the garden. The moon rises and fills the room with light. The little girl gets out of bed, takes the doll out of the cradle, and sits nursing her near the window. On the table beside her is her bullfinch, in a cage, asleep. She talks to her doll :

How fast the sun has fallen down the sky !

I wonder where he goes to. You and I

Are left alone, dear Dolly. Do you hear

That bird that sings so beautifully clear ?

He sings and then he listens. . . . Can you say
What he is listening for ? And all the day
What does he do ? Does he think over tunes
To sing at night, because he loves the moon's
Black shadows and white light ? *My* little bird
Can't sing like that ; but yet his little word
Comes straight into my heart. He goes to bed
At sunset ; and he puts his pretty head
Under his wing. You see he has more sense
Than singing all night long to owls and bats ;
He sings just to himself, without pretence,
Or else he sings to me alone ; and that's
All that he needs. . . . And we'll go by-bye too ;
I think we had a tiring day, don't you ?
So good night, Mr. Bird and Mrs. Moon !

I think you ought to go to by-bye soon,
Poor Mr. Bird ; but Mrs. Moon must stay
To cheer the darkness while the sun's away.
So, Dolly, it is time your pretty head
Was lying on your dimity, white bed.

She lays Dolly in her cradle.

Now let me tuck you snugly up all round,
And hush you, so, until you sleep quite sound.

*She rocks the cradle for a little while, then gets into bed
and covers herself up. Presently she dreams that
Dolly gets out of the cradle, stands in the moon-
light, and sings to her :*

When the pretty girlie sleeps,
Then her darling Dolly creeps

From her cradle ; creeps and sings :

Dolly knows so many things !

Dolly knows a day will rise

When the world in girlie's eyes

Will not be a place to weave

Gentle joys of make-believe.

Then no more will girlie tell

Dolly secrets (kept so well) ;

Dolly then, with all her frocks,

Will be buried in a box.

Also there will come a night,

Flushed with shadow, pale with light,

When that singer in the wood

Will be better understood.

Then the girlie's heart will dote

On that strange mysterious note,

For the nightingale will moan

Not his yearning, but her own.

So the world with girlie grows ;

So for ever ; Dolly knows !

But, till she forgotten lie,

Dolly sings ; so lullaby,

Lullaby !

FIVE ODES OF HORACE

I

“QUIS MULTA GRACILIS”

PYRRHA, what slim young lad, in perfume bathed,

Woos thee on roses in some shady grot ?

For whom with careful carelessness is swathed

Thy yellow hair beneath the fillet's knot ?

Thou art his golden dream, unmarred by fear

Lest in thine heart his throne he fail to keep ;

Alas, unwarned how many times may veer

The fickle breeze, how often shall he weep

False faith and altered fortune, and shall stare

With unaccustomed eyes on surges blown

112 "QUIS MULTA GRACILIS"

By the black wind ! Unhappily they fare

Who seek thy brilliance ere thy flame is known.

But as for me, behold the neighbouring shrine,

Where, on the mural tablet, I record

How there I hung my garments, drenched with brine

And dedicate to ocean's mighty lord.

II

“DONEC GRATUS”

So long as I was pleasing in thy sight
Nor any youth, preferred to me, allowed
To throw his arms around thy neck so white,
No Persian king was happier or more proud.

“ So long as thou wert ardently in love
With no one else, nor Lydia only came
Second to Chloe, I was set above
Exalted Ilia and her Roman fame.”

By Chloe, Thracian Chloe, ruled am I,
Who adds to song the cithern's pleasing tone; ✓

For her I would not be afraid to die,

If for her life the Fates would take my own.

“ With mutual passion I and Caläis glow,

The son of Ornytus, of Thurian line,

And death twice over I would undergo,

If for his life the Fates accepted mine.”

But what if Venus, vexed when pairs divide,

Join us again beneath her brazen yoke,

Dismiss fair Chloe, set the portals wide

To Lydia, and her banishment revoke ?

“ He is more lovely than a star, and thou

Art rougher-tempered than the Adrian Sea,

Nor weighs a cork more lightly than thy vow ;

Yet would I live with thee and die with thee.”

III

“JAM VERIS COMITES”

COMPANIONS of the Spring, soft Thracian gales
Now moderate the sea and fill the sails ;
No more the meadows freeze nor rivers flow
Clamouring and turgid with the winter snow.

Now builds the bird her nest, whose mournful song
Bewails her Itys, his eternal wrong,
Reproachful of the house of Cecrops still
For savage lust avenged by savage ill ;

And guardians of fat sheep, on grass new-grown,
Discourse upon their pipes in various tone,

Pleasing the god who loves the flocks and ground
Where hills of Arcady with woods are crowned.

Virgil, the season makes us all incline—
Come, drink a goblet of Calenian wine ;
Yet, if it tempt thee, nobly-patroned bard,
Thou must deserve it by a gift of nard.

An onyx box of nard, to lure the cask
From the Sulpician vaults, is all I ask ;
A little box, but yet of ample skill
To wash out bitter care and hope instil.

Does such a chance entice thee to be gay ?
Then let us barter goods without delay ;
If in my cups I steep thee, 'tis not right
To leave thee unamerced, as rich men might.

Come! Not unmindful of the funeral flame,
Let some brief folly part of wisdom claim ;
May nothing hinder nor self-interest rule ;
'Tis sweet, when opportune, to play the fool.

IV

“CUM TU, LYDIA ”

WHEN thou art praising Telephus—the rose

That tints his neck—his arms, more waxen-white—

Lydia, my indignation overflows,

And rages on, in discipline's despite ;

The colour leaves my face, my senses reel,

And down my cheek slow creeps the furtive tears,

Sure proof how deeply in my heart I feel

The flame that yet consumes me not, but sears :

Sears most, when, riotously thrown, the wine

Stains and defiles thy shoulders' pearly sheen,

Or when upon thy lips the tell-tale sign

Of thy mad lover's violence is seen.

Hope not, I warn thee, constancy to find

In one who dare be barbarously rude

To that sweet mouth, for kisses so inclined,

With Venus' purest element imbued.

More than thrice happy those, a thousandfold,

Whom no misunderstandings e'er dismay,

Whose bonds of union still unbroken hold

Until the parting of the final day.

V

“ANGUSTUM AMICE”

LET young men learn to bear, without complaint,
Hardship in arms and poverty's constraint,
Live in the open air, adventurous ride,
And pledge their spears to break the Parthian's pride.

When from afar the warrior chieftain's wife
And maiden daughter, gazing on the strife
From hostile ramparts, such a foe espy,
The damsel to her promised spouse will sigh :

“Unused to battle, will my lord engage
With yonder lion, rushing in his rage

Through the red stream of slaughter ? Oh, beware !
And meddle not with monsters, ill to dare ! ”

Death for our fatherland is sweet and right ;
For though men flee, yet Death pursues their flight,
Nor spares unwarlike youth, but tracks the feet
Of craven fear and cowardly retreat.

Virtue alone can never suffer shame,
But shines with uncontaminated flame,
Neither assuming nor surrendering power,
To suit the fickle favour of the hour ;

Virtue alone, far soaring like a bird,
That scorns the muddy ground and vulgar herd,
Can make for those deserving not to die
A passage through the barriers of the sky.



122 "ANGUSTUM AMICE"

E'en silence will the faithful soul repay :
My little boat might sink, my roof give way,
Were I to let one share them who unseals
The shrine of Ceres and her rite reveals ;

For heavenly vengeance, too long unbesought,
Has oft for good and bad one ruin wrought,
And limping retribution, though it fail
To overtake at once, still keeps the trail.

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